

Prayerbook

In Dutch and Middle High German, illustrated manuscript on paper

Western Germany, diocese of Cologne, near the border with the Netherlands, c. 1510

ii + 295 folios on paper, four watermarks: "étoile couronnée" similar to Briquet 6107, Cologne 1510, "lettre p gothique à long jambage bifurqué à fleuron à quatre feuille" (the watermark is found throughout northern Europe in 1450-1530, see Briquet 8588-8653, especially Briquet 8606, Troyes 1470) and two variations of "main aux quatre doigts serrés, le pouce seul écarté," one with "manchette sommée d'un trèfle" similar to Briquet 11156 (Geneva 1478), and another with "manchette sommée d'un trèfle à quatre feuilles" similar to Briquet 11177 (Maastricht 1532), modern foliation in pencil, 1-295 (including the two flyleaves at the beginning), lacking eleven leaves within the text block and an unknown number of leaves at the end (collation i² [front flyleaves, included in the modern foliation] ii⁸ iii-iv¹⁰ v¹⁴ [-2, lacking one leaf after f. 34, with loss of text] vi⁹ [quire of 8 and a singleton] vii¹⁰ [-4, lacking one leaf after f. 52, with loss of text and decoration] viii¹² ix¹² [-11, lacking one leaf after f. 83, with loss of text and probably decoration] x⁸ [-1, lacking one leaf after f. 84, with loss of text and decoration] xi¹² [-10, -11, lacking two leaves after f. 101, with loss of text] xii⁶ xiii¹⁰ xiv-xv⁸ xvi⁶ xvii¹⁰ xviii⁶ xix¹² [-7, -12, lacking one leaf after f. 162 and one leaf after f. 166, with loss of text] xx⁶ xxi-xxviii⁸ xxix¹² [-5, lacking one leaf after f. 240, with loss of text] xxx⁸ xxxi¹² [-12, lacking one leaf after f. 266, with loss of text] xxxii¹⁰ xxxiii¹⁸ [-18, lacking one leaf after f. 293, with loss of text] xxxiv²), no catchwords or signatures, no ruling visible, written in brown ink in a semihybrida script in a single column on 14-18 lines (the size of the script varies, but the scribe is probably the same, except on f. 1r-v and ff. 131v-133v), rubrics in red or sometimes underlined in red, majuscules touched in red, 2-6-line initials in red or blue decorated with patterns left in reserve or in the two colors (puzzle initials), many of the initials are infilled with flowers or leaves (and in one case with a design vaguely resembling a landscape, f. 271) in ink washes of yellow, green, red, and blue, and further decorated with penwork flourishes in pale pink, some trimmed, one large drawing in brown ink enhanced with red ink of the Crucifixion (f. 142), several stains, including water stains on ff. 61-63, 294, small tears to the top corner of some of the leaves (e.g. ff. 216-217), lacking the lower margin and some text on f. 1 and the most of the leaf on f. 85 (containing decoration), in overall good condition. Bound in an early Flemish binding of dark brown calf over wooden boards, front cover blind-tooled with two frames and a central flower, spine with three raised bands, a pair of original brass catches and brass clasps mounted on leather straps, the lower clasp broken, edges painted red, leather very worn, detached and lacking in places, otherwise in good condition. Dimensions 90 x 65 mm.

Prayerbooks from Germany are rare. This charming manuscript – full of lively penwork with color washes and a large drawing of the Crucifixion – survives as an important witness to manuscript production in the region bordering the Netherlands and Germany, around 1500. Perhaps made in Cologne, the volume includes North Holland decorative features, along with vernacular prayers in a mixture of Dutch and Middle High German.

PROVENANCE

1. The styles of script and decoration, as well as the watermarks on the paper, suggest dating the making of this manuscript around 1500. The manuscript may have been copied in the diocese of Cologne, as suggests the leaf from a Cologne calendar that survives in the beginning of the manuscript. Furthermore, the watermark *étoile couronnée*, found on the paper used in our manuscript, has been localized in Cologne in 1510.

Moreover, the language used in the manuscript, a mixture of Dutch and German, suggests that it was made in the border region, the most western part of the diocese of Cologne that reaches close to Amsterdam and North Holland. Nevertheless, the decorative initials are comparable to those made in North Holland, around Haarlem (see below), suggesting the relocation of an artisan eastward, or a western exemplar copied locally. The inclusion of long prayers to St. Thomas (ff. 63v-65v) and St. Sebastian (ff. 142v-143v) might indicate special veneration of these saints, perhaps providing clues for further research in localizing where the manuscript was originally destined to be used.

2. North German private collection.

TEXT

ff. 1-2v appear now to be used as flyleaves, although they may have initially been part of the manuscript; they are inscribed with the modern foliation and contain: 1r-v, Calendar, use of Cologne, the month of October and the last two feasts of September and the first three feasts of November (all other leaves lost); the important feasts highlighted in red ink and marked as "duplex" include those of St. Gereon of Cologne (10 Oct), (St. Ursula of Cologne and) the 11,000 virgins (21 Oct), St. Severin of Cologne (23 Oct); other saints include St. Eberigisil (also spelled Everigisil, Evregisilus, Evergisilus), bishop of Cologne (24 Oct), St. Hubert of Liège (3 Nov); the diocese of Cologne bordered the dioceses of Utrecht and Liège at the time; f. 2r-v, ruled for music but otherwise blank; two further leaves from the same manuscript (one copied by the same scribe as the one who copied the calendar leaf, and another leaf with lines ruled for music) are used as pastedowns on the back cover;

ff. 2-12v, prayer to Christ referring to the Mount of Olives, beginning imperfectly, "...an den berch van olyveten daer hie sat op synen bloeten kuyen...";

ff. 13-32v, prayers to Christ (ff. 13-14), the Holy Spirit (ff. 14-15), the Holy Trinity (ff. 15r-v), the Virgin Mary (ff. 15v-18), the guardian angel (ff. 18-19), all angels (ff. 19-20v), all saints (ff. 20v-21v), holy fathers (f. 21v), holy prophets (f. 21v-22), holy apostles (ff. 22-23v), all martyrs (martelaar, ff. 23v-24), all confessors (ff. 24-25), all virgins (jonge vrouwen, ff. 25-27), all souls (ff. 27-30), all angels (ff. 30-32v);

ff. 32v-42v, three prayers to Christ, the first preceded by the rubric "een iinnich gebet totten biden onse heven here ihesu christus";

ff. 43r-v, prayer to Christ attributed to Hugh of St. Victor, to be said every day, "Here ick biid dy dattu my geves dat my altyt na dy verlangen moet...";

ff. 44-52v, three prayers to Christ, the first one is long (ff. 44-49v) and introduced by a large initial;

ff. 53-55v, prayer to God the Father, originally introduced by decoration, the first leaf is now lacking;

ff. 55v-63v, long prayer to Christ, "O here ich come...";

ff. 63v-67v, prayers to St. Thomas, followed by two prayers to Christ;

ff. 68-73v, long prayer to accompany the dying, preceded by a large initial and rubric, "Nu betracht den doot ende die guode gotz laet denselven in di wircken ende ganck daer mede te dynen vader. Wanner dii den ontfangen hevet so sprick" (Now contemplate death and the goodness of God. Let these work in you and go to your father with this. When the latter has received you, speak thus), incipit, "Or(atio) Begerlike begeringe alre creaturen Wees my willekomen myn alre groetste vroude Myn hoechste troist myn ewige toever(laat)" ((Prayer) Desire of all creatures, be welcome my supreme joy, my highest consolation, my eternal refuge); we are grateful to Ad van Els and Anne Margreet As-Vijvers for their kind help in translation;

ff. 74-84v, prayers to Christ;

ff. 85-101v, prayers to angels, lacking the large opening initial, followed by two short prayers to prophets and apostles on ff. 100v-101v;

ff. 102-104v, prayers to Christ;

ff. 104v-116v, prayers to the Virgin, beginning with five Ave Marias;

ff. 116v-117v, prayers to the Holy Sacrament;

ff. 118-131, prayers to Christ;

ff. 131v-133v, originally blank, a contemporary scribe added prayers;

ff. 134-142, prayers to Christ, ending with a large drawing of the Crucifixion of Christ;

ff. 142v-143v, prayer to St. Sebastian;

ff. 143v-295, prayers to Christ, God the Father and the Virgin Mary, ending imperfectly, lacking leaves at the end.

ILLUSTRATION

Cologne had strong ties with the Netherlands, and the style of decoration in this manuscript illustrates the link with North Holland, probably Haarlem (whether the origin of the artist or the exemplar). Dutch manuscripts can often be localized by the penwork that decorates the initials because each large town or region came to have its own style. Very characteristic of the North Holland region is the pearl border with thorns and the fountain motif; these penwork types are frequently found in manuscripts produced between 1450 and 1475 that are destined for Haarlem (cf. Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten 1992, p. 88). Both penwork motifs are found in our manuscript: the rim of pearls with thorns frames the initial, and the fountain, a motif reminiscent of spouting water, is placed at each outer corner of the penwork frame (see for instance f. 271). Below the fountains in our manuscript are found flower buds that are enhanced with touches of yellow, green or red wash, which are somewhat reminiscent of the "eye-leaves," a penwork type found in manuscripts made in Haarlem in the last quarter of the fifteenth

century (cf. Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten 1992). Furthermore, the patterns left in reserve in the Lombard initials, as well as the foliage designs that infill these initials, can be compared to Haarlem production, for instance, a prayerbook made in Haarlem around 1498 probably destined for the St. Maria Magdalenaklooster in Amsterdam (The Hague, KB, MS 74 G 1; cf. Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten 1992, p. 114). For further research, see especially the studies by Hülsmann and Nieuwstraten.

The Crucifixion drawing on f. 142 adds another layer to the devotions of this section of text. In this drawing, Christ hangs from a tau-shaped cross. Thanks to Francis's own devotion, the Franciscan Order promoted the tau-cross, and this may possibly suggest a fraternal origin for this volume. The body of Christ is covered in splashes of red ink, demonstrating a devotion to the suffering body of Christ very characteristic of the late Middle Ages, and perhaps especially acute in Germany (for one example among a great many, consider the Crucifixion on the Isenheim Altarpiece attributed to Matthias Grünewald and painted in these same years).

In contrast with the numerous Books of Hours copied in France, Italy, the Low Countries, and England, relatively few examples of these medieval bestsellers survive from Germany. Jeffrey Hamburger mentions approximately fifty manuscripts that contain the Book of Hours in German, which is a very modest number compared to Books of Hours in Dutch (Hamburger 2013, p. 97). Indeed, instead of the Book of Hours, in Germany, the favorite type of prayerbook throughout the Middle Ages and until the Reformation was the *liber precum*, a prayer miscellany, as found in our manuscript. This genre has its origins in pre-Carolingian Europe (Hamburger 2013, p. 99). There appear to be no numbers available for vernacular prayerbooks in German, and despite their medieval popularity, they remain exceedingly rare today.

The rich textual contents of our manuscript are interesting and highlight its hybrid nature. The language demonstrates both German and Dutch features and offers an important witness for the linguistic history of this border region. Prayerbooks of German origin include a wide range of material that cannot be considered prayers, such as snippets of sermons, meditations, pastoral epistles and short edifying treatises, that are not generally found in French or Netherlandish manuscripts (cf. Hamburger 2013, p. 99). The contents of this volume remain solidly prayers, however, a fact that highlights the hybrid culture of its commissioner living in a borderland, both Dutch and German.

Our manuscript is also especially interesting because it includes a large drawing representing the Crucifixion, in addition to several initials decorated with rich colors. In comparison, most vernacular manuscripts copied in the Netherlands were not illuminated with miniatures but contained only decorated initials. Eberhard König suggests that once the text was translated into the vernacular, the readers no longer felt the need for the images (König 2012, pp. 12-13, 16). Manuscripts without miniatures were also more accessible to audiences with more modest means, but they were, nevertheless, expensive purchases.

LITERATURE

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Wüstefeld, H. C. and A. S. Korteweg, *Sleutel tot licht: Getijdenboeken in de Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica*, Amsterdam, 2009.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Codices Electronici Ecclesiae Coloniensis (digitized Cologne manuscripts, including the 392 medieval manuscripts at the Cologne Dombibliothek)

<http://www.ceec.uni-koeln.de/>

TM 1440